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U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, August 20, 1931.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "More Questions." Information approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, and Bureau of Entomology.

Bulletins available: "Canaries: Their Care and Management". and "Gourds for Bird Houses."

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No doubt about it--these home canners are keeping me on the jump lately with their questions and more questions. Only day before yesterday we discussed all those questions about canning corn. Now here are more canning questions. Questions this time about exhibiting home canned products at county and state fairs.

Several home canners who have never exhibited before ask what qualities will be considered in scoring these displays. I've noticed that the best judges use common sense and a careful eye when they go over home-canned fruits and vegetables. So, naturally, an attractive neat appearance always appeals to them. Color, for example, is one point they will consider. The best canned fruits and vegetables are as nearly their natural color as possible. Of course, with green vegetables, like peas and spinach, some color is necessarily lost in cooking under pressure. The liquid in the jar should be clear and free from seeds. If the juice looks cloudy, the judge will suspect, with good reason, that the fruit was either carelessly prepared, or was over-ripe or has spoiled.

The way the jars are packed counts also toward that attractive appearance. The ideal pack is one in which the jar is completely filled with fruit or vegetables, with just enough liquid to cover the solid pieces but not enough to float them.

Then there's the container. If you are displaying a group of products, containers all of the same size will look best. And, of course, they will be spotlessly clean and shining. The label will be neat and accurate, large enough to be read easily, but not so large that it looks unattractive or hides the contents of the jar. And labels will be pasted on in the same place on every jar. This helps give the neat uniform appearance that makes a good first impression on the judges.

And, finally, there are those two very important qualities---flavor and texture---to be considered. If tasting is out of the question, as it sometimes is when there are large numbers of cans to be judged, at least texture can be discovered by the appearance of the food. Both fruit or vegetables should be whole and firm. No ragged edges or soft places to indicate careless handling



or over-ripe spots.

My Next-Door-Neighbor told me the other day that she thought I ought to mention feet whenever I talked about home canning.

"Feet?" I said. "What in the world have feet to do with canning."

"Everything," she replied. "Feet may spoil the housewife's disposition, may make her tired and careless in her work. Yes, or even unhappy and despondent over the success of her best jelly or her finest tomato relish. Comfortable feet are a greater advantage to the housewife in summer than quantities of labor-saving equipment. Why, standing on tired, aching feet day after day is enough to give any woman an inferiority complex. ~~And~~ you know, Aunt Sammy, that any woman who has aching feet and an inferiority complex is very likely to make a failure of anything she puts in a can."

So, here are some hints on foot comfort for the home canner. Fresh, clean stockings every day, even if it means washing a pair every night, and a daily soap-and-water foot-bath. It may take extra time but it saves in the long run. Feet shut up in shoes for sixteen or more hours of the twenty-four, need at least a bath a day to keep them comfortable and healthy. The best time to give feet their warm-water-and-soap bath is at night. In the morning a plunge in a bowl of cold water will help keep the skin and flesh firm. And dry them by vigorous rubbing. A little foot powder is soothing and helps absorb excess moisture.

Yes, I certainly am going to say something about shoes. If I ever turn into a campaign speech-maker, my platform will be strong for comfortable feet for every housekeeper. I'll stand up on my soap-box and proclaim in a loud voice that cheaply made shoes are rarely an economy. They are very likely to cause foot trouble. Shoes should feel comfortable when first tried on. That painful process that some women call "breaking-in" shoes, should never be necessary. Why expect that uncomfortable new shoes will become good fits after they are worn? A shoe that doesn't fit when you buy it often means a perfectly good but useless pair standing in the closet. Shoe trees put in each night will make shoes last longer and be more comfortable and better looking.

So much for shoes. Now let's talk about mosquitoes. I have some young friends, who would like to know how to discourage hungry mosquitoes from feasting on human beings.

That good old remedy called oil of citronella is one of the most successful materials for keeping even the hungriest mosquitoes away. It may be used pure, or mixed with mineral oil, vaseline or lanoline in the proportion of one part to five. Almost any oily preparation on the skin expels mosquitoes to some extent.

There is no cure for mosquito bites yet discovered. Some simple remedies like soap applied moist, offer some relief, however. But it's a good idea to prevent the bites. Have the screen doors closely fitted and have them open outward. And keep good screens over all the windows--full length screens, if possible, so the windows can be open both top and bottom. The screen mesh should not be larger than 16 openings to an inch, you know, or the mosquitoes may slide in through the screen. Another move against mosquitoes is spraying with a kerosene pyrethrum mixture. This will destroy those that are struck





by the spray. And it will repel others.

Cousin Susan came in yesterday in great distress. Her canary, she was sure was suffering from the heat. It had lost its appetite. And it sang only in the saddest tone; as if it felt that this world was a vale of tears.

"Maybe it's not having the right diet," I suggested. "I'll ask the Menu Specialist what she thinks. I imagine that she will suggest some cool fruit ~~drinks~~ served with the meals, some crisp, cool, colorful salads; and some frozen desserts. There is a fine recipe for peach mousse that I'm sure would be--"

Cousin Susan stopped me right there. I saw right away that I had made a dreadful mistake somewhere.

"It certainly would appear, Aunt Sammy," she said in her chilliest voice, "It certainly would appear that you are suffering badly from the heat, too. The idea of suggesting such food for my canary!"

Dear me. I had to get right at it and do something to help Cousin Susan's hurt feelings as well as her canary.

So I went up and got a copy of a bulletin called "Canaries: Their Care and Management." I don't own a canary, but I'm sure anyone who does ought to have that bulletin, for it tells all about looking after canaries in sickness and in health. It tells about the right kind of cages, about feeding the bird, and giving it baths and airings and providing the right kind of perches to keep its feet comfortable. (This last appealed to me, of course. Even canaries, you see, are happier with comfortable feet.) In fact, I'm sure that bulletin answered all the questions that any canary-owner might like to have answered.

I'll be pleased to send you a copy, if you would like to give your bird scientific care.

While I was looking for that bulletin I discovered another one concerned with birds. A new leaflet which described bird houses that may be made from gourds. If you are interested in growing gourds or in putting up some artistic bird houses, send for Leaflet 36, "Gourds for Bird Houses and other Purposes."

Tomorrow: "Salads First."

